

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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O 151244Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9440

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 CAIRO 15323

NODIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

EO 11652: XGDS-1
SUBJ: MARR, US, EG, UK
SUBJ: MIG MAINTENANCE

REF STATE 221161,

1. WITH BAIRAM HOLIDAY IN ITS SECOND DAY, I HAVE BEEN UNABLE CONTACT ANY KNOWLEDGEABLE EGYPTIAN MILITARY OFFICER TO OBTAIN CLARIFICATION REQUESTED. AS MATTER OF FACT, GIVEN EGYPTIAN MILITARY SENSITIVITY, ONLY GAMASY COULD PROVIDE SUCH INFO OR AUTHORIZE THAT IT BE PROVIDED. GAMASY IS STILL WITH THE PRESIDENT IN THE CANAL ZONE.

2. HAVE JUST COME FROM MEETING WITH UK CHARGE MOON. BECAUSE ON BRITISH SIDE MIG MAINTENANCE IS HANDLED BY MIN OF DEFENSE, MOON WAS NOT WELL INFORMED AND BROUGHT IN BRIT EMB AIR ATTACHE, WING COMMANDER COLEMAN. NEITHER MOON NOR COLEMAN HAD YET BEEN APPRISED OF LONDON SUNDAY TELEGRAPH ARTICLE OF SEP 11. HENCE, I HAD TO SHOW IT TO THEM. COLEMAN OBSERVED THAT, SINCE PROGRAM HAS NOW BEEN UNDER WAY FOR TWO YEARS, HE WAS SURPRISED THAT NEWSHAD NOT BROKEN LONG BEFORE THIS TIME. ALTHOUGH BRITISH WERE CLEARLY A BIT UNEASY ABOUT OUR REQUEST FOR INFO, IN PART BECAUSE THEY MAY STILL HARBOR

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SUSPICION THAT WE ARE SEEKING TO ARRANGE PRIVATE AMERICAN COMPETITION WITH ROLLS ROYCE AND HWAKER-SIDLEY (I AGAIN ASSURED THEM THAT WE WERE NOT SEEKING TO DISPLACE EITHER BRITISH COMPANY). COLEMAN PROVIDED FOLLOWING INFO:

3. ROLLS ROYCE (R-R): THE PROJECT BEGAN ALMOST TWO YEARS AGO WHEN SADAT VISITED THE UK AFTER HIS FIRST TRIP TO WASHINGTON.

AT THAT TIME SADAT MET R-R CHAIRMAN AND REQUESTED HIM TO LOOK INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF R-R ASSISTANCE FOR MIG ENGINE REPAIR. R-R CHAIRMAN RESPONDED THAT HIS FIRM COULD HELP WITH ENGINES, BUT NOT WITH AIR FRAMES. HE SUGGESTED HAWKER-SIDLEY MIGHT PERFORM LATTER FUNCTION. R-R HAD SUBSEQUENTLY SENT TEAM TO EGYPT TO DISCUSS PROBLEM WITH EGYPTIAN AIR FORCE. FOR A LONG TIME EGYPTIANS THOUGHT R-R ENGINE MIGHT SIMPLY BE INSTALLED IN MIG AIRCRAFT IN PLACE OF SOVIET ENGINE. THIS, R-R ENGINEERS POINTED OUT, WOULD NOT DO. R-R HAS BEEN WORKING AT HELWAN MILITARY FACTORY. INSTEAD OF ATTEMPTING PUT NEW ENGINE INTO MIG AIRCRAFT, R-R EXPERTS HAVE BEEN SEEKING TO ASSIST EGYPTIAN AIR FORCE IN OVERHALING ENGINES. THIS HAS BEEN DONE IN THREE PHASES: (A) FIRST PHASE INVOLVED LEARNING TECHNICAL KNOW-HOW OF MIG 21 ENGINE, WHICH COULD THEN BE PASSED ON TO EGYPTIANS. THIS WAS DONE AT HELWAN AND COMPLETED 18 MONTHS AGO.

(B) SECOND PHASE INVOLVED TAKING ONE OR MORE BATTERED MIG 21 ENGINES AND STRIPPING THEM AS SOURCE FOR SPARE PARTS AND MODELS FOR MANUFACTURING SUCH SPARE PARTS. THIS ALSO HAS BEEN COMPLETED ABOUT A YEAR AGO.

(C) THIRD PHASE INVOLVED MANUFACTURING SPARE PARTS THROUGH A KIND OF REVERSE ENGINEERING. MIG 21 SPARE PARTS ARE ANALYZED IN EVERY WAY IN ORDER TO ALLOW REPLICATION IN R-R FACTORY IN ENGLAND. ONLY SELECTED SPARE PARTS ARE BEING REPLICATED. THIS PROGRAM HAS BEEN WELL UNDER WAY FOR AT LEAST A YEAR. MIG ENGINES ARE IN FACT SHIPPED TO R-R PLANT IN
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ENGLAND FOR OVERHAUL.

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

4. PRESENT STATUS IN THAT A REGULAR STREAM OF MIG 21 SPARE PARTS IS BEING REPLICATED AND INSTALLED IN ENGINES TO REPLACE WORN OUT OR UNSERVICEABLE COMPONENTS. COLEMAN SAID HE DID NOT HAVE THE LATEST INFO, BUT THAT AS OF THREE OR FOUR MONTHS AGO, OVER 60 MIG ENGINES HAD BEEN OVERHAULED AND RETURNED TO EGYPT AS SERVICEABLE. HE DID NOT KNOW EXACTLY HOW MANY OF THESE ENGINES ARE ACTUALLY BEING FLOWN, SINCE EGYPTIAN AIR FORCE IMMEDIATELY PLACED ABOUT 20 INTO STORAGE.

4. HAWKER-SIDLEY (H-S) HAWKER-SIDLEY ARRANGEMENTS FLOW FROM R-R PROPOSAL MENTIONED ABOVE. H-S RESPONSIBILITY IS OVERHAULING OF AIR FRAMES AND AIRCRAFT ANCILLIARY EQUIPMENT, SUCH AS RADAR, NAVIGATIONAL SYSTEMS, ETC. PROGRAM HAS MOVED ALONG VERY SLOWLY AND AGREEMENT HAS ONLY JUST BEEN REACHED. HOWEVER, CONTRACT NOT YET SIGNED, NOR HAS PAYMENT BEEN MADE BY THE SAUDIS. H-S, ACCORDING TO COLEMAN, IS BEGINNING TO ASSEMBLY A TEAM IN CAIRO TO BEGIN A PRODUCTION LINE. IT HAS A FEW PEOPLE HERE NOW WHO ARE ASSESSING SITUATION WITH A VIEW TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW H-S MIGHT BEST ASSIST EAF IN PERFORMING REQUESTED FUNCTIONS. MORE H-S EXPERTS ARE EXPECTED SHORTLY. WORK IS TO BE DONE IN HELWAY, BUT MAY BE HELD UP BECAUSE OF A MAJOR FIRE WHICH TOOK PLACE ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO IN ONE OF THE HELWAN FACTORYS' HANGERS (FOUR MIG 21S

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WERE COMPLETELY DESTROYED IN THE FIRE, ALTHOUGH SOME 30 OTHER AIRCRAFT OF DIFFERENT TYPES WERE SAVED). SOME OF TECHNICAL FACILITIES NEEDED BY H-S WERE DESTROYED IN FIRE AND EGYPTIANS HAVE JUST ASKED H-S FOR ASSISTANCE TO SET THEM UP AGAIN. COLEMAN NOTED THAT EVEN WITHOUT FIRE, HELWAN FACILITIES TOO LIMITED TO HANDLE ANY LARGE NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT.

5. MOON AND COLEMAN WERE RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS COMMERCIAL ASPECTS OF CONTRACT AND I DID NOT PRESS THEM FOR THEM. NOTING CONGRESS HEARING BEING HELD TODAY, MOON WAS ANXIOUS TO KNOW WHAT USE WOULD BE MADE OF INFO THAT HAD BEEN PROVIDED US. SAID I COULD NOT BE SURE, BUT I THOUGH ATHERTON MIGHT FIND IT USEFUL IN CONNECTION WITH ANY QUESTIONS HE MIGHT BE ASKED. MOON AND COLEMAN BOTH EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT ATHERTON SAY NOTHING ABOUT EITHER R-R OR H-S ARRANGEMENTS WHICH MIGHT IN ANY WAY BE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT MIN OF DEF OR MIN OF FORN AFFAIRS SPOKESMEN IN LONDON MAY HAVE SAID. SINCE NEITHER MOON NOR COLEMAN KNEW WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SAID IN LONDON, MOON ASKED THAT ATHERTON DECLINE TO MAKE ANY COMMENT IF ASKED ABOUT THE TELEGRAPH STORY. MEANWHILE, MOON IS SENDING IMMEDIATE

TELEGRAM TO LONDON AND WASHINGTON ASKING FOR GUIDANCE. HE THINKS BRIT EMB IN WASHINGTON MIGHT BE ABLE TO PASS ON TO ATHERTON PRIOR TO TODAY'S HEARING WHAT, IF ANYTHING, LONDON BELIEVES MIGHT BE SAID IF ATHERTON SHOULD BE ASKED. I STRESSED SENSITIVITY OF SUBJECT TO US AND SAMLL NUMBER OF PEOPLE ON OUR SIDE WHO KNOW ABOUT IT.

6. COMMENT: HOPE ABOVE IS OF SOME USE. WILL BE NOTED THAT IN BRITISH STRUCTURE, BOTH MFA AND MINDEF, AND ESPECIALLY THE LATTER, ARE INVOLVED IN R-R AND H-S PROGRAMS. MOON'S NEED TO CALL IN COLEMAN WILL INEVITABLY MEAN THAT LOCKHEED/GE INTEREST IN TAKING A PIECE OF THE MIG MAINTENANCE ACTION WILL NOW BE KNOWN IN BOTH MINISTRIES IN LONDON. IN THE CIR-
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CUMSTANCES, SEEMS TO ME IT WOULD BE WISE TO AUTHORIZE LONDON TO DISCUSS SUBJECT IN ITS BROADER RAMIFICATIONS. WE HERE CAN DISCUSS TECHNICAL MATTERS WITH EGYPTIANS AND, WHERE NECESSARY WITH UK CHARGE (AND NOW COLEMAN), BUT IT WAS CLEAR TO ME THAT NEITHER MOON NOR COLEMAN WILL BE ANXIOUS TO TALK WITHOUT SPECIFIC LONDON INSTRUCTIONS.
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